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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the deliberations of the Commonwealth Pacific Regional Workshop, which focused on the cost effectiveness of small schools. Advantages of small schools include equity for disadvantaged groups, opportunities for rural development, preservation of cultural traditions, and the potential for educational advantages. One task force identified the need for increased parental involvement in small schools. School consolidation is an unpopular method of cutting school costs. The main costs elements in establishing and operating a small school are capital costs, salaries, maintenance, teaching supplies, boarding costs, and transportation. Small schools can be made more cost effective by streamlining the curriculum, engaging in multigrade teaching, using support services, training teachers for the unique demands of small schools, using community resources, improving supervision, boarding students, using mobile laboratories, using mobile teachers, and staggering school enrollment. Alternatives to small schools are home schooling, central schools, combined elementary and secondary schools, distance education, correspondence education, and school clusters. Participants proposed recommendations for education authorities, training institutions, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The appendices include names of participants, a program for the workshop, titles of working papers commissioned for the workshop, a list of background papers available during the workshop, and a list of task force topics. (KS)

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Improving the Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools

Commonwealth Pacific Regional Workshop

Auckland, New Zealand, 19-26 November 1986

FINAL REPORT

Commonwealth Secretariat
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INTRODUCTION

Commonwealth Education Ministers, when they met in Cyprus in 1984, saw the sqeeze on educational finance as one of the most serious threats to national education systems. For this reason they asked the Secretariat's Education Programme to explore the possibilities for raising new money for education and for using existing resources in more cost-effective ways.

In the light of its own limited resources, the Education Programme considered that the most effective way of doing this was to organise focused workshops on aspects of resources for education and their cost-effective use with carefully selected participants and commissioned inputs, and to distribute the findings to the people who have to wrestle with the problems. As a result, a series of three regional workshops was planned in which each workshop aimed to address issues recognised in a selected region as of particular concern.

The first workshop was held in Botswana for the African region in June 1985, and dealt with the problem of finding non-government money to support and expand education. Two studies were commissioned for this meeting, one from Kenya where the Harambee movement had made a significant contribution to independent financing of schools; the other from Eastern Nigeria where powerful social and cultural mechanisms enabled large sums of money to be raised by communities for education. The main outcome of the workshop was a handbook entitled "New Resources for Education: Community Management and Financing of Schools in Less Developed Countries" by Mark Bray. Aimed mainly at policy makers, educational administrators, school managers and heads of schools, the handbook is essentially practical, highlighting strategies for community management and financing in conditions of economic constraint. As well as commenting on successful practices, it discusses problems to be avoided.

The second workshop was for the Caribbean and was held in Trinidad and Tobago in June 1986. To ascertain what resource problems were felt most keenly in the region, the Secretariat conducted a preliminary survey, the conclusions of which pointed to the teaching of practical subjects with a vocational link as of particular concern. The reason for this concern stemmed largely from the fact that such subjects were seen as of increasing importance to employment, but disproportionately expensive to teach. The workshop resulted in practical recommendations directed towards more efficient building design and construction,

more cost-effective planning and administration of resources, and the cost implications of various curriculum, examination and pedagogical policies. The conclusions were assembled in a handbook entitled, "Practical Secondary Education: Planning for Cost-Effectiveness in Less Developed Countries" by Dennis Chisman which offers valuable practical advice for educational planners, administrators and school principals.

The third and final workshop was for the Pacific region. It was held in Auckland, New Zealand in November 1986, and focused on a problem common to countries which have thinly scattered populations, namely, having to support small and intrinsically expensive schools. Participants identified the administrative and pedagogical features that make these schools costly to run, and recommended a number of measures for getting optimum educational benefits. The problem is discussed in a direct and attractive manner in a handbook written for the workshop by Mark Bray and revised as a result of deliberations at the workshop. Entitled "Are Small Schools the Answer? Cost-Effective Strategies for Rural School Provision", the handbook highlights the issues, spells out the the choices and describes the measures that can be taken to improve the cost-effectiveness of such schools. What follows is an account of the deliberations of the workshop that led to this handbook.

DELIBERATIONS

SMALL SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

Why small schools are felt to be important to communities and what should be done about them in today's environment of economic stringency were central issues of the Workshop. It was recognised that small schools existed for various reasons. For example, ethnic or religious minorities often sought separate schools for their children; pupils with special needs such as the gifted, the handicapped, those with learning difficulties, or the emotionally disturbed also had to be catered for and, where the policy of separate provision was practised, the schools provided for these groups tended to be small; in certain countries, children destined for careers in science, music, ballet, gymnastics or the like, attended special schools which were often smaller than those catering for the majority of childen; even the policy of having single sex schools in areas of limited population could lead to small schools. However, the most common reason for schools being small occurred particularly in rural areas where low population density coincided with a distribution of small scattered settlements or in sparsely inhabited islands.

From the outset of the Workshop, it was agreed that only the last of these situations - areas of thinly scattered population - should be considered. Participants were familiar with the particular value that rural communities placed upon their schools, especially those whose populations were small and which therefore had to fight to obtain and keep their schools. Many participants had taught in such schools; some still did. Others were responsible for administering education in rural areas with small and scattered populations. Several had responsibility for planning schools in such areas, and a few were engaged in training teachers for them.

What is a small school? This question was addressed by participants at an early stage. In most countries, the definition was found to be imprecise, and schools were described as small if they had only one or two teachers, offered only a limited curriculum, possessed fewer than the normal range of grades or subjects for a 'complete school', had to engage in multi-grade teaching, or fell short of some arbitrary figure of enrolment that was considered to be economically viable. Interest was shown by participants, therefore, in efforts to determine a formula to define the small school. In the Province of Manitoba in Canada, for example, a primary school was defined as small if the number

of pupils enrolled, divided by the number of grades taught, was less than 15; and at secondary level, if there were fewer than 200 students in grades 9-12.

The axiom that 'small is beautiful' was recognisd by participants as particularly apt for the way rural communities viewed their schools. Such communities prized their schools, and many eminent world leaders were proud of the fact that they had begun their education in small rural schools. However, the Workshop recognised that times were changing and costs rather than value were now often the measure used by policy makers and planners. In consequence, communities unable to support economically viable schools were in danger of being denied new schools or of losing even those they possessed.

In the Pacific region, from where most of the participants came, small schools were common because many of the countries had small populations scattered across a multitude of islands. Without the provision of small schools, public education in the region would be virtually impossible. It was recognised that small schools featured in many other countries too. For example, figures submitted in a working paper for the workshop indicated that as many as 82% of all primary schools in India were classed as small.

Small schools, however, were not only a feature of developing countries. in Finland, 70% of all primary pupils were enrolled in schools with fewer than three teachers; in Iceland, the average enrolment for all rural primary schools was only 50; and in Portugal 80% of all pupils attended primary schools with no more than two classrooms. More than 30% of New Zealand's primary schools had only one or two teachers; 25% of all Scotland's primary schools had enrolments of less than 50 pupils; and France had as many as 11,000 one-teacher schools. All these countries gave active support to their small schools, recognising the real value of small schools to the communities they served and ultimately to the nation.

Comparative Advantages of Small Schools

The Workshop reviewed the main comparative advantages of small schools:

1. Equity.
Educational provision through small schools offered disadvantaged groups such as nomads and those living in remote areas the same opportunities for educational provision as other sections of the community.

2. Rural Development.
Every country needed to educate its population if it was to progress. Since it was rural populations that had most frequently suffered from inadequate investment in education, it was they, with their pool of untapped talent, that now deserved to receive priority. Moreover, since almost 80% of the world's population lived in rural areas and these were the areas on which the world depended for its food, it was vital that education should be provided to assist their development and make them as productive as possible. Such policies could also help to retain population in such areas and to stem migration to the cities of young people in search of educational opportunity. Apart from the economic necessity for such policies, there was a security angle since rural depopulation in frontier areas and outlying islands might create a national security risk.

3. Social.
Schools were a vital means of preserving and developing cultural traditions in a country. It was difficult to preserve rural communities unless schools were provided for them, but there was plentiful evidence that community life, given adequate educational support, could flourish and prosper. For this reason, participants at the workshop considered it important to encourage local authorities to give the fullest support to small schools in order to revitalise rural areas by stabilising their populations, stimulating work opportunities in them, and building a buoyant optimism amongst them.

4. Educational Advantages.
The arguments above were all essentially political in that they dealt with society and the economy. Politicians and administrators ignored them at their peril. However, the Workshop focused primarily on the educational arguments. The first was that small schools could be as academically effective as other schools. There was interest in a Canadian symposium on small schools held in 1985, which had revealed that in Alberta's 1985 Diploma results, pupils in small high schools (under 200 pupils) had achieved at or near the provincial average, with some exceeding the average significantly. Small primary schools in Alberta were also found to have yielded results in which pupil achievements were at or above the provincial average. Note was also taken of Canadian research that pointed to the fact that, in addition to achieving scholastic results at least as good as larger schools, small schools had yielded better results in a number of other areas including:

- behavioural attitudes
- socialisation
- independent initiative and entrepreneurship
- community support and involvement

- participation in school activities
- peer teaching and tutoring

Arguing against some of the strategies commonly proposed as an alternative to small schools, one of the working papers drew attention to research by Barker and Gump on school closures which threw doubt on the optimistic asumptions about the educational and economic benefits of consolidation. They proposed for instance the "inside outside paradox", that larger schools might appear more impressive on the outside but, on closer scrutiny, it was smaller schools which provided a better education. They concluded that lowering of school enrolments to a level that demanded multi-grade teaching did not necessarily affect achievement adversely and could in fact have many positive benefits if proper support was given, and if teachers who were trained in the special skills of multi-grade teaching were appointed. Moreover, other research indicated that school closures were not always as economically efficient as commonly thought.

Involvement of the Community with its School

One of the Workshop Task Forces gave its attention to the relationship of the school with the community. It recognised the problem of harnessing the full strength of the community, partly because parents had differing and sometimes unrealistic aims as to what they wanted from the school, but also because many did not appreciate what the school was trying to do and had little idea of what actually went on in the classroom. While trying to build up the pride and confidence of communities, it was important for school administrators to help communities to identify their objectives and to learn to distinguish what was achievable from what was utopian. The school could help parents to understand the realities of employment opportunities and to recognise the potential of non-traditional approaches to education for life.

The Task Force recommended that, in small schools, parents should be much more involved in the affairs of the school including sharing in important information and decision making, and assisting in the educative process where appropriate as resource persons and teaching auxiliaries. It was important that the school for its part, should promote new programmes catering specifically for local community needs, giving these programmes equal status to the school's other programmes.

Resisting Small School Closures

Just how much valued small schools were by local communities could be seen when education authorities tried to close them. The usual argument put forward by authorities for school closure was that the school was no longer economically viable since unit costs had risen to a level no longer justifiable. The grounds for proposed alternatives were that they increased efficiency and quality. The most common solution was for consolidation of schools in a geographical area with at least one of the schools being closed and its pupils compelled to join up with some other neighbouring school. An appropriate response for the community in these circumstances was to set up a group of parents and concerned members of the community to examine the arguments carefully and, if the community was likely to suffer significantly, to organise an effective campaign of meetings, newsletters, leaflets and booklets, and lobbying of politicians to prevent the closure.

It was observed that closure of schools was not something with which many developing countries were familiar since, apart from areas which had experienced environmental degredation or exhausted mineral workings, the need was for expansion of the system, rather than contraction. It was generally in countries of the developed world, where education had been expanded to meet population increases but where birthrates were now falling, that the need to close schools had become an active issue. But there was evidence now that the same could even happen in developing countries as governments, short of funds for educational expansion, explored ways of improving the cost-effectiveness of schools through consolidation.

COST ELEMENTS WITH SMALL SCHOOLS

Throughout the Workshop there was a continuing temptation to be carried away with the multitude of issues that concerned small schools and to forget that the primary purpose of the Workshop was to explore the possibility of improving their cost-effectiveness. For this reason one of the Task Forces was appointed to examine the main cost elements in establishing and operating a small school. Its conclusions were as follows:

1. Capital Costs

The building costs of a small rural school were a capital expenditure that could prove to be a heavy burden to a community if it had to pay the total cost. However, the results of an earlier Commonwealth workshop on Community

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Financing of Schools had shown that, although it was more common for the government and the community to share capital costs, many communities were prepared to make the sacrifice if necessary. The same workshop had explored ways in which these capital costs could be reduced by such measures as:

- obtaining land for the school through donation or low cost rental.
- selecting a school site that was both conveniently located and easy to build on.
- building to a size and to standards that were basic, functional, and yet efficient.
- erecting a building that was adequate for essential needs, but not too elaborate in design or provision.
- using local building materials and architecture if these should cost less than alternatives.
- employing local building contractors and voluntary community labour where a satisfactory standard of work could be assured.
- installing furniture, facilities and equipment that represented good value for money.

2. Recurrent Costs

Salaries represented about 80 per cent of the costs of running a primary or secondary school in a developing country and so offered the best opportunities for savings through improved productivity.

Recurrent costs comprised two main elements:

(a) Salary Costs

- salary costs for teachers including all leave and allowance payments.
- salaries for any non-teaching auxilliary or administrative staff

(b) Non-Salary Costs

- repair, maintenance and replacement costs.
- cost of teaching materials.
- administrative overheads.

- boarding costs where relevant.

- cost of transport for pupils.

The Task Force pointed out that planners and administrators, and even school principals to some extent, needed to consider these costs in relation to national policies for small schools, and in relation to present and projected enrolment, numbers of teachers, numbers of classrooms, and to population distribution in the area. They also needed to know how much finance was to be forthcoming from government sources and how much from non-government sources. From the latter, there was the possibility of community finance through school fees and other fund raising activities. Finance could also be forthcoming from non-government organisations and aid donors. No meaningful examination of cost-effectiveness could begin until all the sources of finance were known.

The Workshop acknowledged that it was commonly accepted that small schools were expensive and sometimes difficult to justify on economic grounds, but it noted the research findings of Hind into school costs which revealed that in primary schools a significant economy of scale on staffing through consolidation occurred only in schools with fewer than 500 pupils. Even with enrolments of 100, the economy of scale was relatively small and was influenced more by pupil-teacher ratios than the actual size of the school. Hind suggested that consolidation of primary schools with fewer than 100 pupils might provide savings, but that to consolidate larger schools would not necessarily result in significant savings and might even cost more.

The Workshop also noted that the true cost of small schools was high and included many items that might not appear on education authority accounts, but were transferred to parents and families. These included the cost of transport, shoes, etc. when larger consolidated schools meant longer journeys for students from their homes. There were also costs which could not be quantified. For example, how could the tiredness resulting from the long walks that children had to make each day to and from school be costed? Or the hunger that resulted from early departures to school without breakfast, and from late homecomings? Or the physical and mental exhaustion of having to perform domestic duties at home on top of daylong study and travel exertions? Comprehensive cost accounts for small schools were very difficult to calculate and the way they were presented usually said more about the politics of the situation than the economics.

MAKING SMALL SCHOOLS MORE COST-EFFECTIVE

With a clear idea of the basic cost elements of small schools, the Workshop was able to go on to examine measures that could be taken to make small schools more cost-effective. It was noted that improving cost-effectiveness was not necessarily the same as reducing expenditure. In some cases improved cost-effectiveness was best achieved by improving quality and quantity of school outputs which might in turn involve increasing expenditure. Therefore, discussion was directed to the two basic activities - teaching and administration - that account for almost the entire recurrent expenditure of a school and to how these processes could be made as cost-effective as possible.

This necessitated examining what is meant by effective teaching and administration, and what action was needed to make these processes efficient in small primary and secondary schools. The exercise became one of identifying the elements of efficient teaching and administration, and determining how unnecessary expenditure on these could be avoided.

Work on this part of the Workshop agenda was carried out mainly by Task Forces whose findings are summarised below.

1. Cost-Effective Teaching

(a) The curriculum.

The Task Force concerned with curriculum issues considered that, to be relevant in rural areas, the curriculum must offer not only a core of essential subjects but also knowledge and skills important to the local community. A problem with this philosophy, however, was that it did not always accord with the aspirations of some parents in rural areas, who wanted a conventional academic approach to education for their children. Moreover, few teachers in developing countries of the South Pacific had the necesary experience or competence to engage significantly in curriculum development, including the production of teaching materials and texts, that a major change in policy would dmand. The Task Force agreed, therefore, that the most practical arrangement was for the national curriculum development unit to be responsible for the broad concepts of the curriculum, leaving individual teachers to adapt the content to local conditions.

Considering the changing nature of rural communities in Pacific countries and the need to make small schools as cost-effective as possible, the Task Force was of the opinion that small secondary schools would function best

if they followed a narrow core curriculum of perhaps five basic academic subjects and were to offer only a limited number of practical subjects as options. However, it noted that this was not easy to implement since practical subjects such as agriculture, home economics, and technical education required not only specialist teachers, but also expensive specialist rooms and equipment.

(b) Teaching Methods and Teacher Skills.
Teachers who taught in rural areas often often found themselves facing situations for which their training had not equipped them, partly because rural communities could have expectations as to a teacher's role very different from those of urban communities, but also because the relatively small number of pupils and the constrained resources of the school presented a very different challenge to the teacher as compared with the conventional classroom.

The teacher in a small rural school needed to have a good rapport with the community and a willingness to share in its activities. Frequently, leadership qualities and an ability to advise on matters that concerned the community's relations with the wider world were expected. In the classroom there was the need not only for competent teaching skills, but also those needed to manage with very limited resources the learning of small groups of children of widely ranging age and ability working simultaneously at different contents and levels. This called for a competent, imaginative and innovative approach to teaching that could operate without close supervision.

Small schools presented pedagogical problems that did not occur in larger schools. Teachers in them, because of isolation and limited support, tended to be starved of the resources that other schools took for granted and in consequence, had to become much more self-sufficient.

A consequence of small enrolments was that teachers often had to engage in multi-grade teaching, ie. teaching children of different ages and grades at the same time. Conventional training had little relevance here. Appropriate training necessitateded learning how to manage groups of children who were at different stages by using individualised study methods with some pupils while giving instruction to others. It necessitated teachers being able to create work sheets and other materials from which children could learn with minimal help from the teacher. It meant getting away from the limitations of a timetable dictated by periods of 30 minutes or so and organising teaching into longer 'blocks'.

Multi-grade teaching did not need to be regarded as an unwelcome necessity for teachers in small schools, for it had much to commend it. It brought together children of different ages and development in a learning environment that mirrored society and how it learns. Of necessity, multi-grade teaching required teachers who were able to organise individual and group learning efficiently. They had to be proficient at setting individual assignments that enabled chidren to learn effectively by themselves, and to use resources efficiently. Multi-grade teachers had to be able to recognise leadership qualities in their pupils and know how to use these to help children bear greater responsibility. They also had to encourage the use of leadership qualities for the increased amount of group work that featured in multi-grade teaching. Such responsibility could have a notable effect on the character and maturity of children taught in small schools.

The longer and more continuous contact of pupils with one teacher as occurred in small schools could be beneficial because, in teaching, more is communicated than purely knowledge. Of course, if the role model provided by the teacher in prolonged contact with a group of children should be bad, the effect became very undesirable. For this reason, it was important in small schools to ensure that children had some contact with as many teachers as possible.

Research in Canada had shown that children taught in multi-grade situations could achieve better results than those of children taught by conventional methods. But success demanded skills of a high order in the management and organisation of learning.

(c) Support services.
Experience showed that funds available to small schools for resources were often disproportionately limited compared with other schools. Teachers in such schools, apart from enjoying a more favourable pupil-teacher ratio, had to make do with fewer resources than colleagues in larger schools. Starved of resources, teachers in small schools had to learn to be resourceful themselves and needed training in how to make effective use of what resources were available in the environment in which they worked.

Low enrollment in small schools also created problems such as the loss of intellectual and social stimulation and insufficient numbers of pupils for team games.

It was a conclusion of the Task Force dealing with support services that small schools required more

professional, administrative, resource, social service, and community support than large schools.

In relation to professional support the Task Force spelled out the kinds of support required:

i) Human - in the form of advisers, seconded teachers, voluntary helpers, evaluators and experts in guidance and counselling.

ii) Time - in the form of release for lesson preparation, reading and in-service training.

iii) Systems - in the form of broadcasting, the provision of teaching aids, and networks of people, physical resources and information.

iv) Financial - funds for special projects and special staffing needs.

2. **Cost-Effective Administration**

(a) Staff Training, Selection and Deployment.
It had already been noted that the professional qualities required of a teacher in a small rural school were different from those of an urban teacher. In addition, there was likely to be a greater and more direct involvement with the local community. This had administrative implications that affected the training, selection, and deployment of teachers.

With regard to training, the Task Force dealing with the teacher's role in small schools stressed that appropriate professional training was essential and that, despite practical difficulties, this training ought to include the practical skills that were needed in small schools such as multi-grade teaching, preparation of assignments for individualised learning, supervision of peer teaching, etc.

Teachers, especially headteachers, working in small communities were often called upon to play an important role in the community. Some communities held their teachers in high esteem and often approached them for counsel because of their experience and knowledge of the outside world. Little in conventional training courses prepared teachers for such a role, yet without it, teachers in isolated rural areas could be considerably handicapped.

One of the working papers prepared for the Workshop dealt with the value of appointing teachers who, as well as being suitably trained professionally, were emotionally and culturally suited to teaching in rural locations. This was because, although there were some advantages to teaching in rural areas, there were several disadvantages. Cutural and professional pursuits were more difficult, household goods tended to be more expensive, transport could be difficult, and salary payments could be delayed. Education authorities and communities needed to give attention to helping to overcome these difficulties if they wanted to retain good teachers. For some teachers, working in a small rural school without financial or professional incentives could seem like a punishment, but for the right person, the work could be both enjoyable and fulfilling. It was important, therefore, for school administrators to appoint to small rural schools the type of teachers who were likely to make a success of it. Husband and wife partnerships had often been found to be an effective solution to staffing problems. However, in the last analysis, all depended on the character, personality, temperament, and professional skills of the individual teacher.

Some consideration should also be given to assessing the value to education of existing community resources and the potential of other resources that could be developed. For example, some communities were rich in skills and traditional forms of art and music. Where skills such as these existed, teacher training should enable teachers to benefit from them.

(b) Optimising the Use of Resources

i) Teachers

Participants pointed out that, if optimum use were always to be made of teachers in small schools, there would be impressive improvement in the cost-effectiveness of the main recurrent cost element in running a school, namely, staff salaries. Unfortunately, this was very difficult to achieve in small schools unless teachers were able and willing to be versatile in both teaching and non-teaching roles.

A practice that had received considerable support involved using the community as a resource. By this means skilled craftsmen could be used to help with instruction; leading people in the community could be invited to teach children about its history and traditions; and children could be taken into the community to learn skills, and to experience work in the real world that they would one day enter as

workers. Parents were a further resource that could be drawn on for such tasks as fund raising, supervising children in non-teaching activities, informal teaching of hobbies groups, and helping with the school library or with games. Action of these kinds provided a staff force larger than that which was formally employed and so, while adding little or no cost to the salaries bill, teachers were enabled to operate more efficiently.

ii) Accommodation and equipment
Accommodation and equipment in small government schools were often limited and spartan, but communities sometimes contributed additional facilities. Administratively, however, it was important to ensure that as intensive use was made of these as possible. Some principals did this by opening up the school to adults in the community, others by operating shift systems or by staggered attendance for different pupil groups thus spreading the use of the school's facilities over more hours in the day.

(c) Supervision
Small schools, because of their size and remoteness, often suffered badly from inadequate supervision. Heads and their staff were often left to get on with the job with little in the way of encouragement for professional development and always the possibility of malfunctions going uncorrected. The Task Force dealing with staffing issues drew attention specifically to the need to ensure in rural areas that teachers' professional and ethical conduct was beyond crticism.

Improvement in supervision required a deliberate decision by education authorities to give special attention to small schools and to allocate resources to them in greater measure than a simple per capita basis might justify.

(d) Support services.
Four forms of administrative support were considered by the Workshop.

i) Boarding
Boarding was a widely accepted means of enabling geographically isolated children to obtain schooling. It necesitated pupils living for the period of their schooling in accommodation supplied by the school, or in nearby rented lodgings,

Some parents favoured the practice in the belief that the socialising effect of children of different cultures and economic backgrounds living and working

together was helpful, or that the experience of strict discipline was beneficial. Others, however, questioned the quality of supervision and believed that because the practice removed the essential responsibility of child training from parents and contributed in many cases to long-lasting emotional hang-ups, it should be looked upon only as a last resort. The case study paper on Secondary Education on the Island of Tiree provided a useful insight into the attitude of parents who held the second view and, therefore, pressed their education authority for schooling to be provided locally. The result of their protestations, it was claimed, not only enabled the children to receive their education without leaving the community, but encouraged them to find their careers in the locality and ultimately helped to preserve the economy of the community.

While boarding offered an opportunity for children to receive an education that otherwise might not be available to them, it did add significantly to the cost of schooling. Studies did not agree on how much more it added to the cost of education since conditions differed greatly between individual cases, but it should not be assumed that consolidation involving boarding was an obvious solution to the economic problem of small schools. What boarding did offer was an educational opportunity for pupils for whom there might otherwise be no prospect of schooling because of a lack of local provision.

ii) Transport

Transport was usually needed to bring to school pupils who lived at a distance. However, as the cost of transport escalated in proportion to the catchment area served by the school, transport for small schools tended to be more economical than for larger schools in more extensive cachment areas. Administrators needed to calculate transport costs with great care when deciding whether or not to merge smaller schools to form larger ones, and also to recognise the consequences on parents of whatever action they took.

iii) Mobile Units

As an alternative to taking children to the place of learning, some countries had experimented with bringing the place of learning to pupils. Mobile laboratories and workshops had been used, and one of the background papers for the Workshop described a successful project pioneered by a School Division in Canada to provide a mobile resource centre.

iv) Mobile Teachers

Another administrative solution to the problem of schools that were too small to justify the provision of specialist subject teachers was to engage mobile or peripatetic teachers. Such teachers could share their time between a number of schools enabling children to study specialist subjects that otherwise would not be available. They were generally welcomed by headteachers because of the additional flexibility they offered for curricular options, but the amount of travelling necessitated by the job, especially in thinly populated areas, made it physically demanding and generally unpopular with married teachers.

(e) Enrolment

Staggered intakes were an administrative solution to the cost problem of running a school for a community where the number of local children was too small to enable an annual enrollment of 40 or more to be taken into the reception class. The most common method of doing this was to enroll children only every second or third year. This ensured that each grade was of a size that warranted a full time teacher. However, it did mean that some children would have to wait one or two years before entry to school and that they would be educated in a school that had only one or two teaching groups and these would be composed of children of different ages. The alternative was to admit annually and engage in multi-grade teaching.

COST-EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVES TO SMALL SCHOOLS

Acknowledging that there might be some circumstances that made it impossible to support a small community school, the Workshop identified a number of measures used in various countries as alternatives to small schools.

1. Parents

Although no time was given to examining the possibility of parents educating their own children because, in developing countries, it was usually unrealistic to consider this as a genuine alternative, note was taken of experience in developed countries. It was acknowledged that parents were the adults nearest physically and emotionally to their children and with the greatest interest in their future. Many of them would welcome a greater say in how their children were educated and in what they were taught but, for the most part, lacked the knowledge or expertise to be able to do anything about it.

New Zealand's Correspondence School had for nearly seventy years depended on the co-operation of parents in encouraging their children with their studies and in giving help when necessary. Elsewhere, there were a number of correspondence systems such as the Parents' National Education Union (PNEU) that allowed children to follow the same curriculum as they would in their home country even though they were actually living with their families overseas. In these schemes, parents were crucial to the success of their children's learning.

In some countries, particularly developed ones, parents were seeking the right to educate their children at home. In Britain there were 1,600 families doing so and the number was growing. The law, where it existed on this matter, was often on the side of parents, for even where it claimed education to be the responsibility of the state, it usually allowed suitably educated parents to take over responsibility for the education of their children.

A cost appraisal of education conducted by parents was difficult to draw up because any statement of costs ought really to include not only expenditure on teaching materials, but on the time spent by parents. However, home teaching, for those who needed it and for those who could provide it, offered an interesting and, for the government, a potentially cost-effective alternative to other forms of schooling.

2. Central Schools

Central schools existed on the premise that, because they could draw pupils from a wider catchment, they were more efficient and cost-effective than a group of smaller schools drawing from separate areas within the same catchment. They were usually integrated with a boarding or bussing system for the children. It was accepted by the Workshop that in purely financial terms, the argument in favour of central schools was generally convincing. But, in addition to the problems of travel, tiredness, boarding, and cultural estrangement raised earlier, there must be reservations about education conducted outside a young child's own community and environment.

3. All Through Schools

The 'all through school' was a response to the limitations that smallness placed on an institution. By enabling pupils to receive their primary and secondary education under one roof, the 'all through school' enlarged its scale of operations greatly compared with small schools catering for primary or secondary sectors separately. As a result, 'all through schools' were able to employ larger staffs with wider expertise than would have been possible in smaller schools. They were also able to offer a wider range of

physical facilities such as a hall, library, laboratories, etc. and a fuller range of curriculum options They were also able to provide greater continuity for pupils, longer term relationships between staff and pupils, wider social contacts, and make more flexible use of staff.

The Task Force that examined 'all through schools' as an alternative to small schools also pointed out some of the disadvantages. These included the greater demands in skill and understanding laid upon principals responsible for a range of education covering as many as twelve grades, and in ensuring that the secondary department did not dominate the primary. There was also the potential industrial relations problem of primary and secondary teachers working together since they would belong to different teachers' unions, and secondary teachers might try to dominate policy in the school.

4. Distance Education

It was noted that distance education had been used as a learning system for most of the 20th century. However, its main appeal had been to adults, though New Zealand had used it for primary education since 1922. Distance education was an individualised form of learning, designed to enable students to study on their own from teaching materials supplied or recommended by the institution in which they were enrolled, and to receive help only from time to time from their distant tutor.

In the past, distance teaching materials consisted almost entirely of printed materials sent by post. In consequence, the system was often called correspondence education. But in more recent times, innovations have influenced both the format of teaching materials and the means of their transmission. Modern distance teaching materials included printed papers, recorded audio and video cassettes, and film and printed photographs. Some even comprised special kits for undertaking assigned tasks in science or other practical subjects. Many still came by post to the student, but there was a sizable quantity that now came as radio and television broadcasts, some even having been transmitted by geostationary satellites.

Distance education might seem to be just another way of parents being given responsibility for their children's education, but it had been used in many different ways, sometimes as an independent alternative learning system to that provided by the formal school system, and sometimes as a supplement to the courses offered in schools. For example, some schools in Malawi used distance learning materials for pupils, enabling students to study successfully in subjects where the school had no specialist teacher. In India, the success of SITE - an experimental

project providing distance teaching by satellite for small rural schools - had led to a new national programme of satellite instruction for small schools.

It was sometimes said that distance education was not suitable for young children, and it was agreed that there was some truth in the claim. But distance education was merely a description of a delivery system. The content, presentation, and additional support was as important as with other educational systems. The phenomenal success of 'Sesame Street' in many countries around the world was indicative of the appeal and effectiveness of educational television with young children when used in conjunction with other types of support.

Much had been written concerning the cost of distance education. Studies showed that student achievement could be every bit as good as in conventional schooling and that, where very large numbers of students enrolled in particular courses, the benefits of scale came into operation and unit costs could be very much lower than conventional methods. It was unlikely, however, that small schools in the Pacific could ever raise an audience of users to match those in India using INSAT 1B. Nevertheless, the Pacific region already had benefitted from PEACESAT 1 and no doubt would continue to do so as long as that satellite was available.

5. School Clusters

Small secondary schools could not hope to offer as wide a range of subjects or enjoy resources comensurate with larger secondary schools. The problem could be overcome to a large extent by small schools in a limited area agreeing to share their facilities with one another. As a result, pupils were able to select from a much wider range of courses, and teachers were able to spend more time in their area of speciality.

Sharing on a large scale had been undertaken in the Red River area of Canada. Four school divisions had agreed to co-operate to enable pupils in grades 10-12 enrol in cosmetology, auto body repair, power mechanics, welding, building and food trade courses. In practice, half of each pupil's time was taken up in the vocational specialisation chosen; the other half was devoted to regular academic studies. The courses were organised so that pupils took a complete semester of vocational training and one complete semester of academic education each year. The latter was taken in the pupil's home division.

The main drawbacks of the shared facility concept were that:

- transport added significantly to costs, assuming of course that such transport between the institutions was readily available.

- pupils lost much time in travelling.

- very careful co-ordination was required between the schools involved since they formed, in effect, a kind of split-site institution.

- school spirit was more difficult to create and maintain when pupils were on the move so much.

To some extent school clusters could be serviced by peripatetic teachers, but the main requirements for success in the sharing of facilities solution were to have clear and open communication and a strong sense of co-operation between the staff of the various schools.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of practical cost-effective possibilities weredrawn from the Workshop deliberations and they are summarised below. However, it was recognised that every country was different and even different areas of the same country were unique. Consequently, action on these possibilities could only succeed where conditions were appropriate, such as:

1. Greater Involvement of Parents and the Community

- Giving communities greater responsibility for what schools provide and help to enable them to do so effectively.

- Using the practical support of parents and the community, eg. serving on school boards, and assisting with teaching and administration.

- Providing parents with help on how to give effective support to their children's education.

2. Recruiting, Training, and Appointing the Best Teachers for the Job

- Establishing a selection procedure that ensures that teachers are chosen only from among those who fit in well with the environment of the school and with the community it serves.

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- Providing appropriate incentives to encourage the right kind of teacher to stay.

- Offering training (initial and in-service) that meets the special needs of teachers working in small schools

- Providing appropriate support services, including teacher aides, to compensate for the lack of resources likely to be found in small schools.

3. Developing an Appropriate Curriculum

- Creating a flexible and diversified curriculum that satisfies the needs of children in the community.

- Involving parents, teachers and the community in curriculum development.

- Incorporating meaningful self-sufficiency, work experience, and productive work into the curriculum.

4. Using Appropriate Teaching Methods

- Using multi-grade teaching where necessary.

- Developing low cost teaching materials.

5. Making Optimum Use of Existing and New Resources

- Using skilled persons from the community as teaching resources.

- Using work places in the community as teaching resources.

- Creating the school into a resource centre for the community.

- Developing and drawing on support services for the schools.

- Using appropriate and available distance education materials.

6. Formulating a Coherent Policy for Small Schools

- Having clear objectives.

- Incorporating, where appropriate, inter-ministry co-operation.

- Extending educational opportunity across the age range from pre-school to adult.

- Providing adequate finance and other resources.

WORKSHOP ARRANGEMENTS

Background and Mandate

The mandate for this workshop came from the ninth Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers held in Cyprus in 1984. As explained in the introduction to this report, it was envisaged that the workshop would be one of a series of regional meetings aimed at improving the cost-effectiveness of resources devoted to education.

Aims and Objectives

More than half of the countries that make up the Commonwealth have populations of less than one million. In addition, many have large geographical areas with only thinly scattered human settlement. The provision of education in such areas presents many difficulties and results in relatively high costs compared with urban centres, or even rural areas that are more densely populated.

In order to address the problem of high-cost education in such areas, the objectives of the workshop were:

1. To explore the social, economic and pedagogical factors involved in making small schools more cost-effective and to determine what measures might be taken to achieve this in Pacific member countries.

2. To make available the findings of the workshop in the form of a practical handbook that would assist educational planners, administrators and school principals in determining practical policies for improving the cost-effective of small schools in rural areas.

Hosting, Location and Dates

The government of New Zealand kindly agreed to host the workshop from 19-26 November 1986 and to make arrangements for it to be held at Auckland College of Education. Educational visits to small schools were planned as an integral part of the workshop and several such schools in the remoter parts of North Island's Northland were chosen for the purpose.

Participation

In order to ensure a good geographical spread of participants and a balance between those who had experience in different aspects of cost-effective policies, the Commonwealth Secretariat invited all the fully independent Commonwealth countries in the region to nominate representatives and invited a number of experts to act as resource persons. The aim was to draw together participants who offered a fully representative geographical spread, and as wide a range of experience and expertise as possible. Organisations that had a regional interest in education in the Pacific and a specific concern for education in thinly populated areas were invited as observers. Authors of the working papers commissioned were also invited to attend.

Working Sessions

Plenary sessions were held each day to ensure co-ordination, but the main achievements of the Workshop were accomplished by the eleven Task Forces set up to tackle special issues relating to the main topic

Documentation

As will be seen in Appendix III a number of papers were commissioned for the Workshop and a larger number of background papers was assembled for reference. These were distributed to participants and taken as read so that as much time as possible could be given to discussion of the theme in all its aspects.

Educational Visits

An extensive programme of visits in the Northland region of North Island, New Zealand, was arranged by the Department of Education. The programme included a weekend visit to Paihia to see the Bay of Islands and the site at Waitangi of the signing of the accord between Britain and the Maoris.

The educational visits were conducted on the Monday and were to different types of institution in sparsely populated areas of Northland:

- Moerewa Primary school with 126 pupils (88 per cent Maori) and 7 staff.

- Waima Primary school with 37 pupils (mainly Maori) and 2 staff (husband and wife).

- Opononi Area School, an 'all through' central school, incorpoating primary and secondary departments. with 356 pupils (50 per cent Maori) and 21 staff.

Financing

Finance for air travel and subsistence for sponsored participants was provided by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, but the New Zealand Department of Education kindly provided facilities at the Auckland College of Education for the work sessions and for document production. It also provided generous support for participants through the liaison team assigned to the workshop, and made excellent arrangements for the educational visits. The Economic Development Institute of the World Bank kindly contributed funds to enable the handbook emanating from the workshop to be distributed free to educationalists in developing countries whose work involved planning or administering small rural schools.

Acknowledgements

The Commonwealth Secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the Hon. Russell Marshall, New Zealand's Minister of Education at the time, for agreeing to host the Workshop and to address the Opening Ceremony. Our grateful appreciation is due also to Mr Peter Goddard, Regional Superintendent of the Department of Education in Auckland for his deep personal interest in the progress of the Workshop and for making available the resources of his department.

The support given by Mr Peter Smith, Principal (Co-ordination) of the Auckland College of Education, and the total commitment of Mr Colin Percy to local planning and organisation assured the Workshop of a sound framework for success. These officers, together with Mrs Elizabeth Ellis, and Miss Win Penman, who gave themselves tirelessly to administrative matters and the welfare of the participants both in Auckland and at the Bay of Islands where participants resorted for a recreational break, made the Workshop memorable, worthwhile and thoroughly enjoyable for all.

Mention must also be made of Mr Sefulu Ione, Director of the Pacific Islanders' Resource Centre, whose splendid reception at the Centre gave participants from outside the region a wonderful flavour of Pacific Island hospitality; and to Mr Denis Thorne and the school Principals who arranged most interesting educational visits to small schools of different kinds in Northland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants accepted the fact that decisions concerning small schools were ultimately political judgements, but were of the view that these decisions should take into consideration fully the wishes of the community, the quality of education that can be offered, and the true cost of alternatives. Where a decision was taken to open or retain a small school, it was important for the education authority to provide effective support. To this end, participants proposed the following types of action:

Action by Education Authorities

1. Local Education Authorities should conduct surveys in areas where the population is small and scattered to determine the best ways of meeting the educational needs of both young and adult members of the community. Before closing small schools and resorting to consolidation, they should make certain that the communitieas concerned will be better off educationally with the alternative offered, and that the financial savings will be more than marginal.

2. After considering carefully the pros and cons of small schools and cost-effective alternatives, Local Education Authorities should formulate coherent cost-effective policies for the education of scattered rural populations.

3. They should review the curricula followed by small schools to ensure they are relevant locally as well as nationally.

4. Staffing appointments to small schools in rural areas should be made on the basis of the suitability of teachers for the social, geographical and pedagogical environment in which they will work.

5. Local Education Authorities should provide adequate incentives, funding, teaching materials, and staff training for teachers in small rural schools.

Action by Training Institutions

1. Training Institutions should offer in-service training geared specifically to the needs of teachers working in small schools in rural communities.

2. Special courses of training suitable for teachers working in small rural schools should be developed. The courses

should include topics such as how to conduct multi-grade teaching, how to create and use individualised teaching materials, how to use the community as a learning resource, and how to make low cost teaching materials.

Action by the Commonwealth Secretariat

1. On the basis of discussion at the workshop and comments on the draft submitted to the workshop, the Commonwealth Secretariat should publish a practical handbook for educational planners and administrators that deals with questions that must be asked before decisions are taken about opening or closing small schools in rural areas or offering alternative forms of schooling. It will also deal with steps that can be taken to make such schools more cost-effective.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX II PROGRAMME

Day	Morning 0900-1230	Afternoon 1330-1700	Evening
Tuesday 18 November		Arrival of overseas participants	
Wednesday 19 November	**REGISTRATION** **(0900-0920)** Registration of local participants. **OPENING CEREMONY** **(0930-1130)** Maori welcome: Powhiri and karakia. Speeches by the Minister of Educat- and Workshop Direct- or.	**PLENARY 1** Introduction of part- icipants, followed by outline of the issues to be addressed by the workshop. **PLENARY 2** The role of the school in rural areas.	
Thursday 20 November	**PLENARY 3** Curriculum and pedagogical issues. **PLENARY 4** Teacher issues.	**TASK FORCE SESSION 1** Group A1: The school and community Group A2: Curriculum issues and multi-grade teaching. Group A3: Teachers and small schools	
Friday 21 November	**PLENARY 5** Cost implications of small schools and budgetary constraints. **PLENARY 6** Support services for small schools	**TASK FORCE SESSION 2** Group B1: Small second -ary schools. Group B2: Small school costs. Group B3: Small school support serv- ices	**FIAFIA** **(1700-2100)** Pacific Islanders' Educational Resource Centre.

Day	Morning 0900-1230	Afternoon 1330-1700	Evening
Saturday 22 November	**PLENARY 7** Task force reports. **PLENARY 8** Review of week 1.	**RECREATIONAL VISIT** Travel to the Bay of Islands.	Dinner at Paihia
Sunday 23 November	**OPTIONAL PROGRAMME** Visit to Waitangi for church service and lunch. Visit to Waitangi National Reserve.	Harbour boat tour and dinner.	
Monday 24 November	**EDUCATIONAL VISITS** 1. Moerewa primary school. 2. Waima primary school.	3. Opononi Area School.	
Tuesday 25 November	**PLENARY 9** Alternative models of cost-effective schooling in scattered rural communities. **PLENARY 10** Improving the cost-effectiveness of small schools: practical implications.	**TASK FORCE SESSION 3** Group C1: Area schools. Group C2: Boarding schools. Group C3: Internal organisation of schools. Group C4: School clusters. Group C5: Costs.	**COMMONWEALTH RECEPTION**
Wednesday 26 November	**PLENARY 11** Task force reports	**PLENARY 12** Scope for regional co-operation to help small schools.	

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APPENDIX III DOCUMENTATION

WORKING PAPERS PREPARED FOR THE WORKSHOP

1. Improving the Cost-Effectiveness of Small Schools: The Issues, by Service Farrant (Commonwealth Secretariat).

2. Trends in School Development in the Pacific with Special Reference to School Size, by Prem Udagama (University of the South Pacific).

3. What Worth Small Schools? by Gurmit Singh (University of the South Pacific).

4. School Location Planning Under Conditions of Scattered Population and Small Schools, by Klaus Bahr (UNESCO).

5. Planning Schools in Thinly Populated Areas, by Mark Bray (University of Hong Kong).

BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE

1. The Development and Training of Teachers for Remote Rural Schools in Less Developed Countries, by Linda Dove (The World Bank).

2. Education in the Commonwealth Pacific, by Tom Kennedy.

3. Reaching the Rural Child of India with Educational Technology, by M M Choudhri (NCERT, India).

4. Small School Support Program in Manitoba, by John Shaw (Manitoba Department of Education).

5. Support Services for Small Rural Schools, by S W Harvey (NSW Department of Education, Australia).

6. Kiribati - the Search for Educational Alternatives in a Pacific Micro-State, by Colin Hindson (South Australia College of Advanced Education).

7. Secondary Education in the Outback: the Western Australian Scene, by John Davis (The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education).

8. Secondary Education on the Island of Tiree, Scotland, by Ian Halliday (Formerly Deputy Director of Education, Strathclyde, Scotland) and Colin O'Brian (Tiree High School, Scotland).

9. The Use of Mobile Units for Industrial Arts and Home Economics, by John Shaw (Manitoba Department of Education, Canada).

APPENDIX IV **TASK FORCE TOPICS**

A1. The School and Community.

A2. Curriculum Issues and Multi-Grade Teaching.

A3. Teachers and Small Schools.

B1. Small Secondary Schools.

B2. Small School Costs.

B3. Small School Support Services.

C1. Area Schools and All Through Schools.

C2. Boarding Schools.

C3. Internal Organisation of Schools.

C4. School Clusters.

C5. Further Cost Issues.